

Indiana University Football Media Conference

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Head Coach Tom Allen

Press Conference



TOM ALLEN: Good morning. Appreciate everybody being here. Just going to follow up from the weekend, just continue to have the same tone, emphasis. Very disappointed with the performance, not happy at all.

It's my responsibility to get our guys ready. And turn the ball over six times is a formula for disaster no matter who you play. Put our defense in some tough spots. Didn't like how they responded in those sudden change situations. But when we made them have to drive, we forced them to punt nine times. So that's what you're supposed to do on defense.

So didn't like how we finished at the end offensively and -- well, throughout the game offensively. But the end wasn't -- just kind of negative, completely negative spin at the end of it. But that's the bottom line.

Very frustrated with that whole response from our guys and challenged what they had this weekend and expect a different type of performance. Preparation-wise, that's not been the issue. It's about how we're playing.

And, you know, we've got to come together. Got senior day coming up on Saturday. A special group of guys, a long list of guys that will be recognized. And they've earned the right for us to finish strong and play with the level of intensity, toughness, and passion that I know is the standard here and expectation.

And so that's what I expect our guys to do. And continue to try and get some guys back this week. That will obviously be a focus and get some guys healthy. And also welcome in a team that's a big, physical football team in Minnesota. Well coached. Coach Fleck has done a good job there. They play hard, they play physical. And they've got a lot of discipline to their team in terms of how they play on both sides of the ball and special teams. So a lot of respect for them and how hard they play.

Do have some guys we want to recognize for the week. Defensive scout, Nick Grieser; offensive scout, Ricky Tamis and Trey Walker; and then special teams scout,

Asher King. So those four guys continue to be several guys of many that -- working hard in practice and trying to do everything they can do to help our guys get prepared.

So ready for questions at this time

Q. I guess asking just follow up on Jack. Kind of where is he at after -- Jack Tuttle, after not being able to come back last weekend?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. So continue to rehab him. And we don't know yet exactly what his status will be for Saturday. But obviously trying to get him back. Obviously got injured with his lower leg injury again, different foot. And so trying to get him back without question.

Q. Do you see any opportunity for Mike to come back before the end of the season?

TOM ALLEN: We're going to continue to evaluate that. I hope so. But don't know. Obviously, that window is closing with each passing day. But just going to have a meeting about that this afternoon just to kind of go through and see where we're at with him. Obviously, he practiced last week and see how much more he'll be able to practice this week and see how he's feeling. Want him to feel great about it and want him to be 100 percent ready to go if that's the direction we go.

Q. Tom, kind of a bigger picture question for you. You've always kind of preached that 1 and 0 mindset. The most important game being this one because it's the next one and such. In retrospect, when you look back as to how you sort of treated the mentality of heading into this season and what have you done to win the Big 10 and stuff like that, do you regret that in any way or -- in keeping the focus maybe more singular than sort of big picture-ish?

TOM ALLEN: You know, no. Now, I don't -- you know, when you don't get the results you want, you go back and you evaluate everything. But when I think -- because I've thought that through. I've thought that through several times because basically, you know, the whole objective was to elevate the next level focus/vision of what you want.



Right?

And so the one-game emphasis doesn't change. That's never changed this year. It's always the next game is the most important game. Why? Because it's the next one, you know. And that doesn't change.

But I've always felt since I've been here that our guys really didn't even believe we could win the Big 10. That's why I said I don't want you guys to break it down on Big 10 championships anymore because those are empty words. Felt that way when I first got here just by watching how everything was being done and the way that the guys prepared. And that's during the season, off -- all that stuff.

So felt like that we had put ourselves in a position -- not just 2020, but even 2019, the changes and the different outcomes on game day and the places that we were able to get victories we hadn't had in the past, at least the recent past.

And so you talk about, okay, what's next in terms of how you see where you are. You come up with the one word chase, which I thought was a great one word for this season to be able to take where we were, to take it to another level because that's what it's about. Right? You don't want to be, hey, well, we finished second in the Big 10 East last year. And, you know, as I've said before, and I'll say it again, you don't break it down on runners up on two. It's about, you know, we want to win the Big 10. That's been a program goal since I've been here.

And so to be able to help our guys take themselves to stretch that vision another step would be the mindset. And so you think about -- the vision is where you want to be. And I was asked the question, you know, on Big 10 Media Day, what does greatness -- we talk about chasing greatness. What does greatness look like for this group? I said, without hesitation, winning the Big 10, you know.

And that's the vision. That's -- that, to me, is what greatness is for this program. That's what we -- I came here to eventually one day win the Big 10 Championship. And that's the goal.

And so, to me, to be able to take a team that I believe had the infrastructure and the talent to do so, okay, that's what I put out there for our guys to be able to chase after.

And so, to me, that's -- you know, without a vision, the people perish. You know, you've got to have that -- something that stretches you.

And so, to me, you know, obviously, we -- is that the reason why we didn't perform well? You know what? I

don't think so. There's other variables involved. But at the same time, we didn't perform well. So you've got to go back and evaluate.

So, yeah, I'll go back in the off season and try to figure out where we maybe missed some things, you know. But I don't think it was that. I just feel like that -- because within that, you have individual guys -- everybody had an individual plan how they were going to chase greatness themselves. And, obviously, as a collective group, you know, would we have been satisfied with just being, you know, middle of the pack or above middle of the pack. And -- you know, that's not what I envisioned for this group.

I did envision them to be able to be at this time of the year competing for and being in the hunt for Big 10 Championship. That was my vision. That was what I believed. And I don't go back to, man, I missed it on that, you know. So have we played to that level? No.

But at the same time, I just -- I believed it. And I want our guys to see it. I want our guys to be able to understand because, you know, sometimes, you know, you don't really know what you can do. And you limit yourself by putting caps -- everybody kind of decides what Indiana can become as a program and in the past. And I get it. I get the past is why people predict things or say things about your future. I understand that.

But how do you break through that? How do you tear down those barriers and those ceilings that people place on you? And, to me, it's by having a vision, casting that vision, and then doing things in place to help surround yourself with people that believe in that vision and players that believe in that vision and want to help you go do that.

You know, I met with -- had a recruit here this weekend on an official visit. And I'm sitting there in my office and we're talking about the vision I have for us to win the Big 10 Championship. That's what I want. And I want guys that come here with that belief and guys that want to create that opportunity for both themselves and then eventually the team will obviously be the beneficiary of that.

So, you know, I know it's a long answer, but I've thought long and hard about some of these things. And, obviously, this has been very, very difficult, very challenging.

And, you know, we've obviously, you know, lost a lot of guys. And we don't look the same as we did. But at the same time, that's part of it.

And you have sometimes -- we didn't have a lot of injuries last year. We still had some guys, you know, that were in and out because of those circumstances. But you just go

through -- and we'll do a complete -- I'll do an absolute just introspective look at every little thing we did leading up to this year from fall camp to, you know, right before the season to during the season to things in the off season and in the summertime and in the wintertime.

And same with talking to Coach Wellman and everything we're doing to try and, hey, you know, why we had 30 guys miss because of injuries. 12 we've had -- you know, 18 guys that we've lost for the season, you know. And so another 12 that have missed multiple games, a bunch of games and key guys. So, you know, trying to figure out why those 30 guys have been out.

But, you know, those are things that we've got to look at. And we'll just look at this whole program from top to bottom and just make those corrections and press on.

Q. Along those lines. Micah was asked after the game about the struggles. He brought up the injuries. But he did say some guys could have prepared a little bit harder at times and brought up the dedication -- maybe some dedication issues during fall camp preparation. Do you think there was some unconscious relaxing among a few guys on this team or anything along those guys?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah, you know, I think that's part of the holistic evaluation. I do think one danger of having a lot of guys back can be maybe some of that that's not even observable, you know, at the time. It's maybe subtly.

You know, you don't have the same -- you almost just kind of, hey, you know what, this is where we are. Or you expect it to just automatic -- and that's where I felt like, you know -- that's what I feared, to be honest with you, because I've worked so hard to be like, you know what, guys, just because we got a bunch of guys back, that don't mean jack to how we're going to perform. I mean, I said that in a lot of different ways and tried to really, really make it -- that's one thing I do know because I was -- I was concerned about that.

I've been a part of some teams that have had -- I remember a particular place I was at, and we had a -- it was almost identical. And I felt like that we had some guys that just assumed, you know, and like I say it's not that they don't work hard but maybe it's not quite the same when you're being questioned, doubted, told you can't do this, told you can't do that, and then it just provides that little extra.

It's such a fine line at this level. You just think about the whole -- it's just so minute. And that's where I felt like just try to really -- kids don't understand that. And you can say

it. But I try to say it different ways. I remind our coaching staff.

So, yeah, I think you got to -- that might be something that just wasn't quite the same sense of urgency maybe, you know. I'm not saying that there was. I'm just trying to look back. And we're going to look at everything, like we said.

But, man, that is definitely a danger of having a group that's a whole bunch of guys back and expectations are a certain place, maybe at a situation hasn't used to that, you know. And so that's where you want to make sure that you, you know, fully go through and find out if that's the case, then you've got to make some changes.

Q. I guess kind of just sticking with this topic and this theme. Are you very much in the sort of guessing phase of what could have gone wrong? Is there anything that you feel like you're close to knowing there? Or are you still in the case of thinking, man, I've got to --

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. I think it's clear, you know, I think as you see things. But, yeah, I don't have all the answers for that. No, not at this minute as we stand here.

I think you'll -- it's always good to step back, you know. You're still in it. You take a step back and you kind of look at it from a different perspective and evaluate everything, you know.

But I wouldn't say I feel, you know -- but, I mean, to me, there's the obvious things. You lose 30 guys, I mean, that's -- that's significant, you know. That's a lot of people that, you know -- and a lot of different roles. From, you know, guys that are getting you ready to how that -- just -- it's just a lot of individuals that, you know, we expected to be part of this and are not.

So that's, you know, we still aren't to the level as a program where we can, you know, absorb all those hits depth-wise. And we're making progress in that area without question. But to handle that many -- and I don't know if I've been anywhere yet that's had that much depth to handle that many losses.

We're, honestly, right now, you're -- you just taking the running back room, for example, in this last week's game, you've got, you know, top four guys that started fall camp aren't there. So that's -- I've never been -- I don't ever remember that happening.

But anyways, I don't want to get into all that. But I feel there's definitely some things to go back and evaluate. And we will. And sometimes things -- you see things and

you kind of make a little mental note. And when things don't go the way you want them to go you're going to -- yeah. But it will be a lot of really -- really deep evaluation, without question.

Q. I got two questions. One is when you're getting rolled like you did on Saturday on the sidelines, how do you channel your frustrations? And is that something you try to be encouraging or, you know, get to yelling? Or how do you personally handle that in that situation? Then the second question is, how do you make sure that the culture that was so strong last year rebuilds quickly to make sure that this kind of thing doesn't happen next year?

TOM ALLEN: Sure. You know, and I think that -- you know, as far as the first question about this, I mean, you've just got to stay composed and stay positive. I mean, that's going to be consistent regardless.

Yeah, you're frustrated. I was frustrated. I know some players were frustrated. And I don't blame them. I share in that.

But when you're in that -- every position -- to whom much is given, much is required. So everybody that's in those positions, which is all of us, everybody watches, you've got to be able to handle those the right way. And sometimes I get a little animated. And sometimes I'm a little more under control in those situations.

But you try to stay, you know, calm in that regard. But at the same time fiery and intense, but in a positive way. If I need to get after them, you get after them. But at the same time, you know, I'm an emotional guy, so you're not going to -- I don't hide things that great, you know. But that's no big secret. But at the same time, you don't want to be out of control.

But I think -- and then you talk about -- for the future and culture, I mean, that's who you are. I mean, there's no question -- that to me hasn't -- you know, there's no doubt that, you know, that's a strong part of this program, built that over time. It didn't just happen. Last year wasn't just, you know, out of nowhere. It was a slow build.

And you have to -- yeah, we'll lose quite a few guys that have been here for several years. And you've just got to continue. That foundation doesn't change. Some faces are going to change. You bring in guys that continue to fit with what you want.

But that's part of going through and having -- whether we were -- you know, no matter what happened this year, that's going to have to be rebuilt in regards to personnel.

But at the same time, the outcomes, you know, creates -- it does, it creates a whole different form. I have a whole different feel in terms of just how you feel about things. And that's why we say -- that's really -- that's got to be separated, you know, because that emotion can't affect you in a negative way and -- just like it can't affect you in a positive way. You don't make decisions off those things. It's all about these are concrete things that we believe in. This is who we are. You recruit to that. You develop to that. You stay to that. You don't waiver from that.

And that, to me, is going to be -- is it tested? Sure, it is. That's why, you know, when you talk about -- you can't have a testimony, which is a verbal, you know, way to articulate, man, this is how we were able to do this and I can talk about it, you know, testimonial. Well, you have to have a test to create that opportunity for those testimonies that people can say about your program.

We're going through that right now. It's been very difficult and challenging. But from my experience, the places that have great foundations, they get stronger because of these types of opportunities to grow and to learn. And I expect this program to continue to grow and learn and be stronger in the future because of it. And that's what I expect.

And myself as a leader is the one that has to be the person out front and being the catalyst for that type of future growth and improvement.

Q. Coach, with everything you've mentioned, the challenges before you and what is -- the lack or maybe a lack of complete intensity of recently, you have the game coming up. How do you get them to play to win, to play with what is needed to get done? Because, obviously, it hasn't been there. And that is beyond a challenge, especially when the losing is there and then you have to go on the road after that to a rivalry game against Purdue on the road, which is going to be presenting even more challenge. How do you really get these guys to do what they need to do to play to win?

TOM ALLEN: Yeah. So the goal is this week to be able to come together and -- you know, we understand that this is a special week. This is a senior class that's -- and it's a unique senior class because you've got super seniors from previous year. So it's a really large group of guys. So you got guys in there that have, you know, used up their eligibility. You've got guys that have maybe one year left and they're trying to decide what to do and everything in between, you know.

But it is for the seniors. No matter how you slice it, it's our senior day. So, to me, it's a special group of guys. There's

a lot of people in that group that have sacrificed a lot, given a lot to this program and helped us be where we are today and built what we've built to this point.

And so, to me, it's about, you know, preparing for them, playing for them, coming together for them. And that's been the charge and the challenge in talking with our leadership guys last night about this. And it's going to be the focus.

To me, that's really what this is about is how we finish the right way, the last home game for this special group of guys.

And so that is the challenge, you know, to be able to put aside and to block out and to get all of the negativity of the past few weeks and come together and play our best football.

And that's what we expect to do, expect them to come in tomorrow morning and have a focus and energy and intensity led by our coaching staff and myself at the front to be able to create that.

And that's -- to me, that's the expectation. And that's what we're going to have to be able to do. And, yeah, is that easy? No. Sure it's not. But that's where you, once again, fall back on the guys here. And we've just got to be able to, you know, do a great job of blocking out things and just focusing on one objective, which is to be able to have our best week of preparation so we can play our best football on Saturday against a really good Minnesota football team. When you finish that, you go do it again one last time with this group.

Q. I guess I was going to kind of follow up on that with senior day. Is there any delineation for guys who have already said I want to use the year? I want to use the COVID year? Do you just kind of let everybody go through it and then sort of sort it out at the back end?

TOM ALLEN: Yes. I would say we're kind of taking more the approach of just take everybody through it and then you kind of -- because there will be quite a few guys that I believe will go ahead and go through the ceremony and then still probably come back and play, you know, another year. Because you just don't -- sometimes you're not ready to have those conversations yet. The season is not over.

But it is unique. I mean, there's always a little bit of that in some ways with a guy if he's going to decide to come back or not. But we've never in the history of our game have we had this number because of the COVID situation that we all went through. And everybody got an additional year.

And, obviously, those guys were all on the team last year. So, therefore, they would all get that additional year.

So that's kind of where it's unique. But then you do have the super senior group that they are done. They've exhausted their years, you know, and that's -- you know, there are several of those. So, yeah, there will be more of those than normal without question.

So we just kind of approach -- it's individual. We talk to every single guy and give them a chance to go through and make that decision. Regardless, like I said, it's a special group of guys, whether this is officially their last time or not. But they're all part of a group that came here, believed in what we were, you know, building before we actually did it. And so always will be a very, very special group to me.

Q. Coach, you had mentioned earlier just about replenishing the team, replacing that personnel, as especially this year's people graduate and move on as their eligibility is done. Is the focus going to be this year more on bringing in high school recruits again or are you going to hit the transfer protocol hard this off season as well?

TOM ALLEN: Well, the primary group will be the high school group. And we've got 14 of those guys committed right now. And we expect those 14 guys to sign with us on December 15 and may add to that between now and then.

But then we'll utilize the transfer portal or whatever you want to call it, the guys that choose to go somewhere else and it gives you a chance to be able to give you some experienced guys that come in

with -- have already played college football. And that would be the case with most of those guys. You could technically have a freshman that didn't play much this year but that comes in from another place.

But, yeah, the core will be high school. And then we'll continue to evaluate, meet needs and find guys that fit with us and want to come here and help us keep building this program.

Awesome. Have a great day. LEO.